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Neglected Arabia



MISSIONARY LETTERS AND NEWS

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The Arabian Mission.

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NEGLECTED ARABIA.

January — March, 1907.

SCHOOL WORK IN BUSRAH.

REV. F. J. BARNY.

We feel that we can say that a definite start has been made this year in this branch of mission work. It is true that the effort is a small one yet, but it has showed vitality and we look for growth. As was reported last year, the missionaries had several scholars, but there were no classes. At the beginning of this year a colporteur who has a family of children was transferred to this Station. Three of his children are of school-going age who, with three others, made a nucleus of six Protestant children dependent on us educationally. Early in the year a start was therefore made, and this day-school has been kept up continuously. One of the rooms in the mission house has been set aside, benches and desks made, and a teacher employed.

The appropriation allowed for the work was only a hundred dollars, while a teacher of any ability could not be secured for double that sum. Besides that, furniture and supplies had to be secured. The condition was met by employing a cheap man and making up the deficiencies by giving instruction ourselves. This seemed to work well at first. But the young teacher proved less efficient than was hoped, and did not develop with his work. As the year wore on, the pressure of other work and the usual trials of summer weather left the missionary less time and strength to give to the school, so that instead of growth there was a standstill. Toward the end of the summer, on the return of those of the missionaries who had been away on vacations, and with the advent of better weather, I could devote my whole time to it, and took complete charge of it. With strict discipline and regular lessons there has been improvement. The attendance at first averaged about ten, and fell to eight, and is now at eleven. There are several applications of those who wish to come. Eight have been constant attendants, one being a Moslem. The remainder has been rather shift, but this element is being eliminated and steady growth cultivated.

There are certain things we have learned and, having been taught us by experience, they are worth noting. The first is, that we can carry

on a school in our own dwellings quite unhindered by the authorities. The fact that it has been in existence unchallenged for nearly a year, is, in itself, a fair guarantee that the school will go on. There may be objections in the future on various grounds, but they will be rather questions of detail, which can be settled or fought out separately, as the case requires. The longer we keep on, the stronger becomes our position, and the step out of the house will become easier.

The second thing learned is, that the question of growth is a question of money. We have always stated that there is room for a mission school in Busrah. There is not only room, but a demand for one giving good English instruction. When Moslems ask for such a school, we can only regard such asking as a challenge, and we have received this challenge. But Turkish Arabia is not a cheap country. Rents are high and teachers command a good salary. A modest school of three grades, in a moderately good house, would cost at least \$600 a year, and require a good deal of the time of one missionary. A first-class teacher, to act as head-master, would alone cost \$500 dollars a year. We intend that there shall be some day a good school here, and we intend also to get the money for it.

One more thing proved is, that a school in one's dwelling is not practicable, at least, not in hired houses. In the summer one must have the ground floor, or, at least, one quiet room, so as to escape the hottest part of the day; but even the one class prevented this. We solved the difficulty this summer by having sessions from seven to twelve in the morning, but with a larger school this would not work. The thing could be solved by building our own houses, but this is another topic.

Another school was conducted for some months last year, and this year also, by Mrs. Dr. Worrall, in connection with her dispensary. The young woman, Jasmine, now engaged definitely in work among women, used to help Mrs. Worrall in connection with the morning services held at the opening of the daily clinic. Mothers brought their children for treatment, and others for safe-keeping. These were gathered into a class, and often there was a goodly number, and some became quite regular in attendance. Instruction was given in Bible, catechism, Arabic reading and arithmetic. Lately the work among women has been more promising, and Jasmine has been set to house visitation. The school had to be given up, and this work is, for the present, in abeyance.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The work among women done by Mrs. Worrall has led to a very interesting work among children. She has three houses, or groups of houses, in separate neighborhoods, where, on Sundays, she gathers a number of children and teaches them Scripture and hymns. The at-

tendance varies considerably, but yet, each separate place will average fifteen scholars each Sunday. The number of children reached is probably sixty.

The Sunday school conducted for our own people, the native assistants and other Protestants, has become a Bible class, and that mostly of young men. Our houses are widely separated, and housewives in this country seem to be less free from household duties than at home, so that we cannot count on the women to swell the numbers. We hold the school in the houses of different members in rotation. This has the advantage of bringing us closer into touch with our people, and also others may be the more readily invited. We have spent most of the year studying the Acts of the Apostles. I regard this Bible class also as a nucleus around which a Sunday school will be built to take in all classes. We believe in education, especially in God's word, and in education in general, that we may raise up an intelligent membership of the young church here, and we seek God's blessing and guidance in whatever leads to this object.

SCHOOL WORK AT BAHREIN STATION.

REV. JAMES E. MOERDYK.

The term "school work" is taken from the rules of the Arabian Mission and is found in the section defining the "object" of the mission and the "main methods" of work. We like the term because its use ought to correct mistaken and exaggerated opinions and ideas concerning this part of our work. Bahrein has not any so-called "institutional" work. Our school is still only a day school, and sometimes struggling at that. And while the future may give us a high school or a college, we hope and pray that it may still be "school work," and always closely connected with and for the sake of preaching the Gospel. The school work of the station is really conducted in two departments. The girls have a session every afternoon five times a week, under the charge and direction of the lady missionary, who will herself write more particularly in a separate article. The other department is called the "boys'" department, not so much because the girls are excluded, but because they are conspicuous for their absence in most of the sessions. The Moslem girls, of course, will not come, and the older Christian girls seem to think that one session a day is quite enough for them, while the smaller girls attend the morning session only, and in the afternoon go with the other girls. Both departments have one building, but separate apartments, and are not at all connected in actual work.

The first school for this work was nothing more than two rooms downstairs in the old rented mission house. These rooms were dark, close and very hot during the summer, and too drafty for comfort in the winter, for the windows had only wooden shutters and to close them meant a very dark room. But at present we have a comfortable new school building, especially built for this work. We are happy to produce a picture of this new school house. There are plenty of



MEMORIAL CHAPEL AND SCHOOL. BAHREIN.

windows, as you will see, furnishing good ventilation and light for the pupils. The building is right on the street, and so situated that in the hot season it is very likely to have the benefit of every breath of cool air that may be stirring. The fact that it is on the street ought also to attract the attention of the children and parents who so often pass that way. There are two rooms, separated by three large folding doors, so that, although usually closed and separating the girls from the boys, they can, if necessary and desired, be thrown open and furnish one large room for lecture or other purposes. The larger room is used by the boys and is twenty-four feet square. The other room is twelve feet by twenty-eight feet. This smaller room has a large closet under the stairs for books, papers, sewing material, etc.; and the

other room has two smaller closets under the window seats. We are refurnishing this school, for we need more seats and desks and other necessities which we have never yet possessed. The seats and desks are being made by the carpenters here. They will be like desks at home, except that they will be all of wood and will seat four in a bench instead of one and two. This is necessary, both in order to save room and expense. We are to have charts and maps so necessary for this work. Our blackboards are mostly mounted on movable racks to suit the many near-sighted Arab boys who cannot use the wall blackboard.

For the first time in the life of the school it can boast a teacher of its very own. Formerly the missionaries devoted as much of their time as could be spared from other work, and also had the assistance of the helper who taught the new missionaries Arabic. The missionary does not now cut loose from this work altogether, for then he would not live up to the sentiment and opinion voiced at the beginning of this writing, but the teacher who has been engaged especially for this work makes it possible to have regular and longer sessions than before. The teacher is a graduate from the Mardin Mission school, and is well able to take all the Arabic work, and is very promising for the English work. He speaks English quite well, which is not always true of others who come to us. He is a Christian and very much interested in his work, and is especially pleased to work where he can come in touch with Moslem children as well as Christian.

As already hinted, the school offers a course in Arabic and in English. The Arabic course is in reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, grammar and composition, and in beginners' geography. The English course is in reading, writing, spelling, conversation, and some grammar and composition. A boy may learn to read quite well and intelligently as we learn Latin or Greek, but he wants to speak the English and needs help to master this. The school furnishes slates and pencils and books to worthy scholars who cannot afford to buy; but apart from this there is no "money or gift inducement" to win scholars. The sessions open with prayer and a portion of Scripture, and oftentimes a Christian hymn; sometimes we introduce a short course of questions and answers on the Bible and its contents. This last is not regular, because of the misunderstanding and opposition on the part of the Moslem parents, and, therefore, we introduce it at times and in quantities as we think best. The object is to use every opportunity possible to preach the Gospel.

You all know the saying that "statistics lie"; and we think that they do not always convey the whole truth. We shall not trouble

you with any except just the statement that the roll of the boys' department counts as many as forty-five names, and from the records we ascertain the fact that the average attendance is about fourteen and fifteen daily. The children who attend are from Christian, Jewish, and Moslem homes, and we have also had one from a Hindu home. The Christian children are most regular in attendance. The parents have a real interest in the school for the children's sake, and help us in getting them to attend regularly. The Jewish children come by fits and starts, and although the parents always want the children to attend, they do not seem to have the influence and control over them that we would expect. The Moslem children are most irregular. Boys have come who seemed eager to have the chance of schooling, have attended for weeks with the greatest pleasure, and have then suddenly stayed away and seemingly lost all interest, which no amount of persuasion on the part of teacher or missionary could restore. The Oriental is never in a hurry, and seems to have no thought of punctuality, either for his own sake or for the sake of another, but as soon as he comes to school, he is all hurry, and expects to learn everything in a little while, and to have everybody stand waiting to teach him at all hours of the day. He soon loses interest and becomes disappointed if this does not take place. We have tried to meet him as far as possible. There were boys who came for English, but only for an hour or two, and then, at times of the day to suit themselves.

In order to give them all an equal chance with the teacher and still to help them when they could only spare a few hours a day, we so arranged that all desiring only Arabic could come in the morning session and those desiring only English, could arrange to come in the afternoon. This seemed to help for a time, but soon the boys became irregular again, and we could not find the reason. Some of the parents, when approached on the subject, told us that they wanted their children to go to school and could understand that a child could not learn everything at the beginning, but they could not send their children because we had too much religious instruction. Our answer was that we did not think it true that there was too much religion in the school, and that we did not think it reasonable for them to object to prayers and opening exercises, that no child was compelled to take part in these exercises, but only requested to be present and orderly for the discipline of the school. Then there have been other excuses to the effect that some of the parents would not object to this, but that some of the leaders in their community objected and openly put them to shame if they sent their children.

Some of the boys who attended and were very much interested

were really waylaid by such a leader and influential Moslem who questioned them as to what they learned, and particularly about religious matters. The boys had not been asked to learn anything religious, but had unconsciously, when listening to the others, learned quite a few hymns and something about the Bible and Christ, and when questioned by this man, innocently told him all. The result was that he took particular pains to rebuke the parents and to forbid these boys and others to attend. Some of the older boys have sometimes taken offence at things they read in the regular lessons, and for that reason stayed away. One boy of about seventeen years of age had for his lesson the surprising story that the earth is round and moves, and that this accounts for day and night. He declared this was against reason and against his religion, and thereafter stayed away. However ridiculous this may seem to you, you can all appreciate how discouraging it must be for those who have this work in charge.

But there is another side to it which we can appreciate without trying to make light of the facts. Those who attend are really influenced and learn of us, not only reading and writing, but things religious. The boys above referred to had learned a good deal more than they knew, and two of them had become so much interested that on a few occasions, they came to the catchetical class on Saturdays, and also came to the children's Sunday school. True, they afterwards left the school, but the fact is, that they did not lose their interest altogether, and did not forget all they learned. They have been to school since, although not regularly. The older boy has been back to school twice, although not now a regular attendant, comes to the Bible shop, and the shop keeper tells us that he is not nearly as biased as at the first, and is open to conversation on religious subjects. The day is not yet at hand that they come asking for the school and for religious instruction, but the day of opportunity to reach them through the children and to reach their children has begun; and shall we not continue in faith and larger hope for the future?

THE "ACORN" SCHOOL ONCE AGAIN

MISS FANNY LUTTON.

Many have seen the little booklet written by Mrs. Zwemer on the Acorn School in Bahrein.

She can write better about it than any one else, because she first started it and kept it going in the midst of trials and difficulties

What a change has taken place in Bahrein since the days she taught on the verandah in the old mission house by the seashore!

We wish you to take a good look at our new chapel and school room. It is the nicest looking building in Bahrein, and in a very prominent position. I think many of the children are as proud of it as are the missionaries.

It was not easy to keep school in the days gone by under the old conditions. The lack of ventilation and light and the small rooms were very trying. But that is all over now, and we teach in well ventilated rooms. Under the old conditions the school had to be closed during the three hottest months in the year. This means uphill work, for it is not easy to gather the children together again.

Oh, the many difficulties (and I now speak about the girls' school) there are in trying to keep school at all.

First of all, many of the Moslems would rather kill their children than allow them to enter a Christian school. The enmity of the cross is very bitter in Moslem lands. And, again, the lack of discipline in the home-training. The children do as they like. If they swear and rage in their homes the cry is, "Oh, it does not matter! they are foolish and ignorant and devilish."

Innocent children are not met with, and we are shocked when we see their home-life.

Islam has done nothing for children, but only to foster them in the midst of corruption. It is enough to stagger one when you hear daily of the hindrances. A little girl comes to school, and her name is enrolled; she is a bright little girl, perhaps about ten years old. When she does not come regularly, inquiries are made, and it is the old story, her husband has beaten her and will not allow her to come! This is a common occurrence, and over and over again the children are forbidden to enter the Christian school. Another difficulty is, that the girls are not counted as important as the boys. It is no shame for a girl or woman to be unable to read. The parents are anxious to have their girls married, but many of them would not be troubled if they never went to school.

On October 1st we entered the new school. Not many came the first day, but before the week had closed, thirty names were enrolled, and at present, thirty-five is the roll call.

The attendance varies, some days twenty-four are present and some days only sixteen. It does not do to get discouraged. That never helps, but only hinders the worker. When the absentees are looked up one wonders that even so many come. Over and over again the children are warned, threatened and beaten if they come to our

school. It makes one's heart ache to hear all the different reasons for non-attendance.

Some would dread to have a school under these conditions, and many would think how hard it must be to have order and discipline. But, as a matter of fact, when once you get these children, they are not hard to manage.

If you could enter the school unnoticed and see these children at their lessons you would exclaim, "Why, they are model children."

It is not hard to win their love, and they respond very quickly to any kindness shown them. Often the teacher has had a bright little face look up into hers, and say, "Oh, you are so good!" If you meet any of them outside they never let you pass without a greeting of peace.

The girl's school is open daily from two o'clock until half past three. Three afternoons in the week the usual lessons are taught, and two afternoons there are sewing classes.

The girls like sewing better than anything else. They try and compete with each other as to who can do the most. How some of you would laugh to see them use the thimble. At first they are so proud of it, but after a little while you find the girl wearing it on her left hand and pushing the needle through in her old way.

All the girls make needle cushions of their noses! Their noses are pierced as well as their ears, therefore, when their needle is not in active service, it is always allowed to rest in their noses at school.

At present they are making patch-work quilts and there are nine in a state of progress. They are to be their very own when they are finished, but I think it will be about Christmas before they are completed. They all know what Christmas means. A little girl gave me such a merry look as she said, "Is to-morrow The Feast of the Birthday?" Many of the children can repeat Scripture texts from memory, and they know some of our hymns.

I sometimes hear the strains of "Jesus loves me" as the children go to and fro from the public well.

SCHOOL WORK AT MUSCAT.

REV. JAMES CANTINE.

Muscat was the first of our stations to begin educational work. From 1894 to 1902 the freed slave school occupied an important place in the activities of our little mission. But, after the boys had grown up and left, there was an interval of several years, with only spasmodic attempts to interest young men in the study of English. It is only since

about a year and a half ago that regular sessions have been attempted. Within that time we have tried four teachers with varying degrees of success, alternating with our own unassisted efforts.

After the school was well organized, we, first of all, gave it over into the hands of Raheel, the widow of one of our colporteurs, and a graduate of the high school of the American Mission at Mardin, Turkey. After her death we had great difficulty in finding a teacher and finally engaged a well educated Hindu living in Muscat. He did good work for some months, but then left for other employment. The third master was an Indian Mohammedan, but sickness soon brought his rule to a close. Now we have at length what we trust will be a permanent teacher in the person of Muallim Ibrahim, also a graduate of Mardin, and lately employed in the mission school at Bagdad. The study of English has been, and I imagine will be, the chief feature of our instruction, but our latest acquisition is qualified to teach Arabic also, and, in fact, is now doing so. There are very few people in Muscat who have a knowledge of Arabic grammar and kindred branches, and we trust there will be more and more a demand for "higher education" such as we now can give.

The polyglot character of the population, and the fact that the number of non-Arabic speaking children are so many, has made the arrangement of our classes very difficult. At one time we had Baluchi, Swaheli, Gujarati, Hindustani, Persian and Arabic all represented, and some scarcely knew anything besides their own language. At first I gave object lessons in English and the boys would get the general meaning of their reading lessons from their vernacular translations, but now the large boys can help in explaining to the younger.

A little arithmetic and geography have been taught, but most of their time is spent in learning to read, write and spell. Some, especially the Hindu boys, seem remarkable quick in learning and if they will only stick to it, will make good progress. The Mohammedan boys are more irregular, and it is only by offering rewards for attendance that I can stimulate their zeal. Fortunately we have a supply of large Sunday school lesson pictures, and these, given for perfect monthly attendance, do wonders.

As to the personnel of the school, the Hindu boys still outnumber the Mohammedans, but with the good Arabic speaking teacher that we now have, we hope to soon reverse this proportion. The Christian boys are only two. There seems to be no difficulty in regard to their all being together in the same room. The only trouble we have had in this respect was when the son of a local Hindu sweeper came to me one morning. I had never met with any of the Hindu caste feeling and was surprised when the others avoided him like the plague, and finally

said they would not stay in the school if he did. I promptly told them that they knew where the door was, but when the parents wrote me a respectful letter begging that their children should not be compelled to lose caste, I took the poor little fellow out in the hall and taught him by himself until he got tired of it.

We open or close with Scripture recitation and prayer, and so far I have not heard of any objection on the part of the parents. Fre-



PUPILS IN THE MUSCAT SCHOOL.

quently also they are taken into the chapel for singing, of which they are quite fond.

Our numbers are nothing of which to boast, averaging only between eleven and twelve for the past month. After the month of fasting, Ramadhan, is over, we will make a special effort to get more Mohanmedan boys. Soon, too, we hope to move the school out of our own house into its own building, and this should prove an added attraction. The present is still the day of small things but there is no going backwards and we expect to succeed.

The picture shown was taken a few months ago and is worth describing as showing what a mixture we have. In the center are our two Christian boys, one from our colporteur's family and the other the

son of the translator at the British Consulate. A couple of Mohammedan boys are in the back row, one the son of a prominent Arab friend of ours, and the other a Baluchi. At the end is another Indian Mohammedan whose father is in the Sultan's custom house. The face of another lad of the same faith is missing. He is a little black boy who has caused us a great deal of amusement by his frantic but almost hopeless efforts to learn to read. His father is servant at the American consulate and is very anxious that his boy should learn how to speak to his *sahib*. Most of the boys are poor and it is a sacrifice for their parents not to have them in their little native shops in the bazaar, where they can earn a few coppers daily. There is considerable change for various reasons, but some of these boys shown in the picture have been with us from the beginning.

A separate girls' class has been kept up by Mrs. Cantine for about six months of the year, the girls being taught Arabic and English, with sewing and lace-making. The average attendance has been from five to eight. Much of what has been said about the boys applies equally to the girls, but there are special difficulties in the way of the growth of the girls' school, arising from the indifference of the parents and the irresponsibility of the children, which we hope in time to overcome. During the last few months the growing medical work has demanded more of our time and energy and we were obliged to let our teacher instruct the girls as well as the boys. With the advent of cooler weather we hope to resume the sewing and lace classes.

Our Sunday school also deserves a brief notice. All the day scholars coming out, and some of the older people as well, our Sunday session is much larger than the week day, numbering from twenty to twenty-four.

In Arabic we have the regular international lessons, while the English studying boys learn portions of the Psalms and of the New Testament. They are also quite keen about the singing, and already know a number of English hymns. A few weeks ago we were invited to attend an entertainment given by the head man of the Hindu community, on the occasion of one of their religious festivals. As part of the musical program, we were greatly surprised to see several of our school boys come out and sing "Jesus loves me" and "Little drops of water!"

We add here a word of thanks to all the kind donors of material for our kindergarten, sewing and other classes, and ask them to pray that the spirit of the great Teacher may direct and bless every effort to bring light and truth to the minds and hearts of the Muscat boys and girls.

NEGLECTED ARABIA.

REV. S. M. ZWEMER, D. D.

There is no one that questions the fact of Arabia having been a neglected country before Keith Falconer landed at Aden in 1886. He was the pioneer of the peninsular unless we count the visit of Henry Martyn at Muscat in 1811 on his way to Persia a missionary epoch. In 1890 the American missionaries came to the Persian Gulf and by God's blessing the mission has grown in numbers and strength. Yet after counting all four forces and taking inventory of all the interest and prayer centered on the peninsular and noting every sign of progress with joy, no one who looks at the map of Arabia or at the reports of our mission can doubt that we still stand before NEGLECTED ARABIA.

1. To begin at Jerusalem, the Arabian Mission is neglected by the churches of our own denomination, neglected, passed over, ignored more than any of the other missions of our church. For, while there were only seventy-one churches that gave nothing to the Board of Foreign Missions last year, there were FOUR HUNDRED AND FOUR churches that did not give anything to the Arabian Mission. Whether this be due to ignorance or apathy, the fact remains that nearly *two-thirds* of the churches neglected NEGLECTED ARABIA in the apportionment of their gifts for missions. Our Quarterly is gratuitously sent to every pastor of the Reformed Church in America, and yet four hundred pastors either consign it to the waste basket or do not think that the cause it represents deserves a hearing on the day when offerings are taken. There are *ten classes* (which is the Dutch for presbyteries) where the total gifts for Arabia did not reach sixty-five dollars!

2. Arabia is neglected because it is still almost wholly unreached by the Gospel. Along its four thousand miles of coast there are only four mission stations, Aden, Muscat, Bahrein and Busrah. Muscat is further from Aden than Chicago is from Denver by two hundred miles; and if you imagine the region between wholly untouched by missionary effort, with three workers at Aden and two at Muscat, you know what NEGLECTED ARABIA means on the south coast. The distance between Muscat and Busrah in a straight line is as far as from Chicago to New Orleans, and to go to the annual meeting means a thousand mile journey for the missionaries at the two extremes of our field. From Bahrein to Busrah is only three hundred and sixty-five miles by the zig-zag steamer route, but it is a three days' journey and boats sail once a week.

Arabia, including the Mesopotamian valley as far as Bagdad, has

a population of at least eight millions. The total number of missionaries for the entire peninsula is twenty-five!

In this country there is one physician to every six hundred of the population, a drug store on every corner and hygiene taught in every school. In Arabia there are eight medical missionaries,—one to a million—and those out of touch with their work of mercy on the coast suffer the horrors of cruelty and superstition unaided when sick or dying.

3. Arabia has seven provinces, Hejaz, Yemen, Hadramaut, Oman, Hassa, Irak and Nejd. Only three of them are occupied by mission stations. Oman is occupied and has two missionaries for a population of over one million scattered in hundreds of villages and hamlets! The nearest mission station west from Bahrein is at Assuan, Egypt, eleven hundred miles away; and looking East from the mission house across the Gulf and Southern Persia and Baluchistan, the nearest wireless station for the telegraphy of the Kingdom is at Quetta, one thousand miles distant.

It is nineteen hundred years since the Great Commission and thirteen hundred since the great apostacy of Islam, and yet the following cities of Arabia are without a witness for Christ, who said, "nothing is impossible with God": Mecca, Medina, Sanaa, Hodeida, Makalla, Shehr, Boreyda, Hail, Hofhoof, El Jowf and a score of others nearly equally important strategically.

4. In view of all these facts, which are in themselves the strongest plea for missionary effort, shall we not all pray for NEGLECTED ARABIA and labor, not as if we had already attained or were already perfect. Forgetting the things that are behind,—the years of service and suffering, the lives poured out and the love poured in on the field, the prayer and sacrifice of the faithful few at home,—let us press toward the mark of our high calling, the evangelization of Arabia. As General Haig said fourteen years ago: "The Dutch Reformed Church when it took up the mission originally commenced on an independent basis as the Arabian Mission, did so with full knowledge of the plans and purposes of its founders, which, as the very title of the mission shows, embraced nothing less than such a comprehensive scheme of evangelization as that above described." In our prayers as well as in our purposes and the published plan of the mission the battle cry still is: "OCCUPY THE INTERIOR OF ARABIA."

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